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## From the Executive Director

# Education as Prerequisite for Success

■ BY HELEN SOULÉ



*“[E]ducation is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success, it is a prerequisite.”*

—President Barack Obama, March 10, 2009

Helen Soulé, Ph.D., has provided leadership to the public and nonprofit sector at the local, state, and national level for over 25 years. Most recently, Dr. Soulé served as executive director of Cable in the Classroom, the cable industry’s education foundation. At the U.S. Department of Education, Soulé was chief of staff to the assistant secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education. For eight years, she was director of the Mississippi State Department of Education Office of Technology, with responsibilities ranging from technology to textbooks to professional development. Her local experience includes being a teacher and district-level school administrator.

These words ring true not only to those of us in community media who are a part of the “e” in PEG (public, educational, and governmental) access but also to all of us who provide formal and informal training to the public, in our centers and on our channels. As President Obama indicates, the education of our children—and our adults—must be a national priority and learning is a task for a lifetime.

The mission of the Alliance for Community Media itself begins with a commitment to education: “In order for democracy to flourish, people must be active participants in their government, **educated to think critically** and free to express themselves.”

Community media centers fulfill this mission each day by playing an important role in both formal and informal lifelong education. Many access centers provide training programs for students of all ages in a variety of topics, such as video production, technology literacy, and media literacy. Access channels provide distance learning courses on many subjects over their cable channels. The centers and channels remain one of the few sources for information about opportunities and issues important to local communities. Read the articles in this edition of *Community Media Review* to get new ideas and learn more about how the public’s education needs are being met every day by community media centers around the country.

Education also plays an important part in the Alliance’s public policy work.

On March 4, a band of twenty Alliance members, led by the board, “marched forth”

to begin our 2009 Keep Us Connected Campaign. We met with senators and representatives, as well as with all members of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), to educate and inform them about the value and the issues facing community media. The hundreds of community media supporters submitting comments to the FCC regarding our filing educated the Commissioners and their staffs about how the law is being violated, the damage being inflicted on community access, and the many services we provide.

Among the highlights: Access San Francisco and California supporters were successful in educating the San Francisco Board of Supervisors about the merits of their Mirkarimi resolution calling on the state legislature and Congress to reform PEG funding. Maryland leaders successfully defeated statewide franchising efforts by educating supporters and policymakers at the hearing about the importance of community media and the danger of statewide franchising.

As President Obama said, education is a prerequisite to success. Education is definitely a prerequisite to our success at the Alliance and in our local communities. It is up to **each of us** to advocate for community media and to educate others about it, as well as to learn anew how to serve our communities. A great place to start is at the Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon, in July. Registration is open, so make your plans to attend now!

In Alliance,  
*Helen Soulé*  
Executive Director

## From the Board Chair

*Be not afraid of going slowly, be afraid only of standing still.* —Chinese proverb

■ BY MATT SCHUSTER



Change is difficult, placing us into unknown territory and uncharted waters. However, change is a necessity. How we respond to change is the real question. All healthy living organisms adapt and change. We can ignore changes that affect our industry, or we can recognize the need to adapt. For our organizations and our industry to thrive, we must adapt to the changes occurring for community media.

### Media Landscape

In recent years, the media landscape has exploded with digital and electronic media. Media makers and communicators use various platforms to deliver content, including the Internet, mobile devices, and broadcast, cable, and satellite television.

While our history is based in cable channel delivery, community media centers are embracing change, adapting to integrate Web communication tools, social media networks, broadband, and more. Community media helps members of our community to communicate, connect, and provide a greater level of access for all. The specific technologies that are used are secondary to the overall mission.

At the request of our regional affiliate leadership, the Alliance for Community Media board of directors recently explored the definition of community media. What we discovered was nothing earth-shattering or mind-blowing. We found an underlying theme of being inclusive of all types of electronic or digital media. Media centers must be teaching, demonstrating, and helping our communities to use the best electronic communication tools to meet their needs.

### Political Landscape

The political landscape also has shifted over the past several years. State franchising laws

have been adopted under the premise of increasing competition for cable services and lowering subscriber rates. Many of these laws have eroded support for community media operations and the promises of lower rates and competition are falling short in practice.

In response, the Alliance for Community Media launched the Keep Us Connected campaign. Congress has held two favorable congressional hearings on community media issues. The Alliance filed a Petition for Declaratory Ruling with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) charging that telecommunications giant AT&T discriminates against local community channels with its U-verse cable TV system. The FCC received over 600 comments, a majority of them in favor of community media issues.

With our partners, the Alliance filed an appeal to the Supreme Court of 6th Circuit Decision on Video Franchising. We are working with federal and state legislators to introduce changes in laws to protect public, educational, and governmental (PEG) channels and funding. And we will be asking again for your voice and contribution as this campaign progresses this year.

### Funding

Lastly, our funding models are changing at a rapid pace. We encourage community media centers to diversify funding. Whether it is out of necessity or foresight, our operations cannot afford to stand on one primary source of revenue.

We are looking to you to help define our industry as we move forward and adapt. The process may seem slow at times, but we are working for the future of community media.

Enjoy this issue highlighting the work and leadership of community media centers in our educational communities.

Matt Schuster is chair of the ACM Board of Directors. He manages the national award-winning government access channel MetroTV in Louisville, Kentucky. Previously, he was cable TV coordinator/station manager for Lake County, Illinois, and Meridian Township, Michigan. All three channels received multiple national awards from NATOA and the Alliance's Hometown Video Festival, including Overall Excellence in Government Programming. Matt also serves on the ACM Central States Region Board. He received his Master of Arts in Telecommunications from Michigan State University. Contact him at [matt.schuster@louisvilleky.gov](mailto:matt.schuster@louisvilleky.gov).

## From the Guest Editor

# Welcome to the Educational Access Issue of *Community Media Review*

■ BY JAN HAUGHEY



Jan Haughey has been involved with the cable access community for the last seventeen years. She previously enjoyed 16 years as a successful account manager for a large audio and video reseller, where she saw the need for a professional organization to serve educators in broadcast and cable access. To meet this need, she created Video Educators of New England ([www.videoeducators.org](http://www.videoeducators.org)) eleven years ago. She has served as chair for the organization since its inception.

I was intrigued when asked to serve as the guest editor of the educational access issue, pausing for a moment to think, just what would such an issue include? Where would we go with this?

I felt a bit like an outsider looking in when asked to serve. I have personally never taught or served on an educational access organization. Yet I have served and stood alongside many such organizations in my 17-plus years in the industry. It was more than 11 years ago when it became glaringly clear to me that educational access was so much more than recording and playing back the school committee or board meetings and the local high school athletic events.

I have had the good fortune to work with professionals who share with students the value of teamwork, meeting deadlines, expressing divergent views, protecting free speech, grappling with changing technology, and gaining confidence along the way. Video Educators of New England came into being to support the works of these individuals as they sharpened their skills and networked with each other.

The education slice of the PEG pie grapples with some of the same issues that public and governmental access do. Front and center is the need to balance the technology with the message. Many of our youth are anxious to get their hands on the fastest Mac or the coolest camcorder and in educational access we strive to provide those experiences. But if we don't ensure that the art of the project is crafted and appreciated, all we end up with are cool toys making noise. To this point we welcome Reade Scott Whinnem and his article, "Teaching the Art of Video."

The toys we have at our disposal to make the art of video keep improving and dropping in cost. We welcome three different viewpoints on this: Ken Freed and his take on

solid-state acquisition; Jeff Possanza's take on streaming; and Jason Daniels's critical eye on nonlinear editing. The changing landscape also is well covered in Jennifer Wager's "Video Distribution 101," as she adeptly points out the various venues we now have for distributing our work.

Educational access provides a gateway to the communities it serves. It opens the door to showcase what the educational community is all about. It's an opportunity to visit the local folks in their living rooms. Connecting the community to the students and the students to the community is one of the benefits of the program Mary Ann Janosko outlines in her article, "The Stories Project." We also learn from the experiences of long-term programs like the ones reviewed in the Fairmont High and Brunswick city school districts.

As many an educator out there knows, they often are a department of one, an island in their district. We thank Phil Harris for sharing a variety of resources available to the educational community. It's gratifying to see Danielle Mannion's students pick up the reins and run a very successful conference.

The challenges teachers and educational access staff face are daunting. Just to name a few: budget pressures, shrinking enrollments and the need to recruit, being a department of one, unrealistic expectations, changing technology, and the explosion of new media outlets. I thank our guest writers for shedding light on some of the many aspects of educational access.



# MILESTONES AND TRANSITIONS

■ COMPILED BY ROB McCAUSLAND

In this new feature, we proudly salute significant achievements of PEG access centers and the people who guide, manage, and use them. Please send your news to [rmccausland@alliancecm.org](mailto:rmccausland@alliancecm.org). We will be pleased to include it in future issues!

## MILESTONES

### PEG Center Anniversaries

#### 25th Anniversary • NOVEMBER 2008

Community Media Network, Troy, Michigan • **JANUARY 2009** TV Tacoma, Tacoma, Washington • **APRIL 2009** CCTV's Center for Media & Democracy, Burlington, Vermont • **MAY 2009** Boston Neighborhood Network, Boston, Massachusetts

#### 10th Anniversary • OCTOBER 2008

Community Access Television, Erie, Pennsylvania • **MARCH 2009** PAC 14, Salisbury, Maryland

### New Facilities and Services

• **SEPTEMBER 2008** *Virtual Studio*, Fairfax Public Access, Fairfax, Virginia

• **OCTOBER 2008** *U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Silver Award*, Boston Neighborhood Network's new facility  
• **JANUARY 2009** *New facility and franchise*, Capitol Community Television, Salem, Oregon  
• **FEBRUARY 2009** *New facility and bi-town service*, Community Media on Hudson, Tarrytown/Sleepy Hollow, New York • **APRIL 2009** *New (fourth) channel turned on*, Fairfax Public Access, Fairfax, Virginia • **APRIL 2009** *Government meeting coverage begins in Rochester*, Minnesota, Provided by Community Media Network, Troy, Michigan  
• **APRIL 2009** *Grand Opening*, CreatTV, San Jose, California

## TRANSITIONS

#### • SEPTEMBER 2008 **Kathy Bisbee**

became executive director of the Community Media Access Partnership in Gilroy, California

• **SEPTEMBER 2008 Steve Gay** became executive director of Winchester Community Access Media in Winchester, Massachusetts

• **OCTOBER 2008 Brian Fraser** became executive director of North Andover Community Access & Media in North Andover, Massachusetts

• **OCTOBER 2008 Marcia Smith** became executive director of Community Access Television of Salina in Salina, Kansas ■ **CMR**

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# Teaching the Art of Video

■ BY READE SCOTT WHINNEM

**The best way to make students wary of television is to teach them how to build it.**

Let's be honest. If you put a camera in a teenage boy's hands, he'll make videos of his friends hitting each other over the head with pillow polo mallets. Teenage girls, on the other hand, curl inside themselves when the camera is pointed at them; they turn away, play with their hair, and beg you to shut the camera off. Unless you give kids some artistic direction, very few of them are going to turn in something assessable. The problem for most teachers is that we're not artists, and asking kids to create art means that we have to grade art. That's scary.

Eleven years ago, I stepped into a classroom at the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School. I was filling in as a long-term substitute for a teacher out on sick leave. I had no teacher training, no certification, and no experience. Most of the forty kids I was introduced to never wanted to take a media class. They had planned to take shop classes, but over the summer all of the shop classes had been cut. They were not happy to meet me.

After several excruciating weeks of teaching, my department head took me aside and told me to go to one of the other schools in our district and introduce myself to a teacher there. He was about my age, but unlike me, he knew what he was doing.

I stopped by his classroom one afternoon. After explaining my situation, he and I started batting ideas around. I didn't have a tech degree, so I wasn't about to teach kids how to solder motherboards. I did have an MFA, and while I'd always thought that it wasn't much more than a crispy piece of paper, my colleague decided to look at it as a strength. Eight hours, a couple of beers, and some shrimp scampi later, I had the ideas that would become and have remained the core

of my class. Instead of rejecting my art background, I embraced it.

I also embraced my hatred of television.

I'll admit it. I hate TV. I mean, I love TV. But I hate it. I think that most people know where I'm coming from. At times television is quite entertaining and educational, but at other times it's so insipid that I start arguing with this inanimate object that I invited into my living room.

My real problem with television, however, comes from the way it targets young people. The disregard for their intelligence, the gender misrepresentation, and the materialism all too often combine into a bubbling cauldron of poison. I used to have a sign up in my classroom that read, "Advertising is a means of establishing superficial, hard-hearted, unattainable social norms." My goal has always been to inoculate students against television. I don't necessarily want them to hate it, but I want them to be wary of it. And the best way to make them wary of television is to teach them how to build it.

After getting kids through the basics of camera operation, I start talking about visual techniques. (If we were going to be media literate about it, we might say visual tactics, but that's a whole other argument altogether.) The students and I talk about high and low angles, high and low key lighting, deep and shallow focus, silhouettes and shadows, point of view, reflections, and symbols. I put up still images of each technique and ask them what the image suggests. "What was the intent of the creator of this image?"

If they have trouble answering that question, I ask them to simply tell me their reaction. I tell them that their reaction is just as valid as mine. "We may look at the same

Reade Scott Whinnem is a teacher consultant through the Buzzards Bay Writing Project. He is the author of the book *Utten and Plumley*, as well as *The Pricker Boy*, due out from Random House in September. He teaches Media Production at Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School.



image and come up with different reactions to it,” I say. “The artist brings the image to us, but we also bring ourselves to the image. I don’t care if you see it differently from me, just so long as you can explain it.” Over and over again, I try to pull them back toward those techniques.

Then using the camera and tripod as hammer and saw, I ask them to build shots that mean something: “Make someone look scary. Or make someone look like they’re in love. Make someone look gleeful, or show me someone who has had their world come crashing down around them. Forget about the acting. I don’t care about that. I’m grading those techniques. Show me what you can do with them. Build, build, build.” They divide up into groups and head out with the cameras.

During postproduction, language becomes key, just as it does in any other discipline. Using model lessons that I acquired through my work with the Buzzards Bay Writing Project ([www.umassd.edu/cusp/bbwp](http://www.umassd.edu/cusp/bbwp)), the students and I play with words. I hand them weak words like good, bad, nice, important, and so forth. These are the words that I’ve seen students use over and over and over, words which in my mind have become as effective as bald sandpaper. I ask them to brainstorm synonyms for the words. They brainstorm alone, they brainstorm together, and they use library resources to explore the words. They ask, “What does this exercise have to do with media production?” I tell them to be patient and not bug the teacher.

As the editing process begins, I tell the students to focus on their explanations of at least two techniques in each of their shots. I remind them of our synonym exercise. I give them the following rubric:

- A score of three means that you use the principle effectively and that you use rich, vivid descriptions that explain your artistic intentions with the shot.
- A score of two means that you use the principle effectively and that you use generalized (though accurate) descriptions to explain your artistic intentions with the shot.
- A score of one means that you made an attempt to use the principle, though it is not used effectively. Your description of your intent is too vague or too inaccurate to demonstrate complete understanding.
- A score of zero means that your usage and description do not demonstrate any effective understanding of the principle or its use.
- Creativity points are also given for how effectively they combine those techniques. They also have to frame their shot well and have proper focus, white balance, etc.

“The best shots,” I add, “will have even more than two techniques. If you have to choose your best out of three or even four, then you’re really showing me something.”

At this point, my students have no choice in the matter. They have to get creative. They have to pick up the tools and build. They have to combine concepts. They have to explore. And then they have to explain their thought process in specific language.

My students hate me for ruining TV for them. They begin to recognize the construction behind the visual media that they consume. They see the beams, they can tell where the load-bearing walls are, and they can tell by the pitch of the roof where the water is going

**We move on to public service announcements, and from there, leap into student-designed projects. I'm happy to say that I don't get the shots of pillow polo mallets from the boys anymore.**

to leak through the shingles. It drives them absolutely crazy to have this new perspective on television. I imagine them sitting in their homes shouting at the inanimate object known as the TV. (It's a delightful image.) They tell me that their parents send them out the room so that they can watch movies in peace. I tell them that things will get better.

Once students grasp the basics of technique, we move on to public service announcements, and from there, we leap into student-designed projects. I'm happy to say that I don't get the shots of pillow polo mallets from the boys anymore. The girls get lost in the creativity and forget about whether they measure up to the music video model. And those art projects that once seemed so hard to grade? They don't scare me quite so much anymore.

Let me give you an example of a PSA project that I recently graded. The students

used only a single shot. In it, a girl holds a pen in front of the camera lens, slowly waving her arm from side to side as the camera tries in vain to stay focused.

"Simple enough," I reply. "Now, why did you do it? Tell me. Write it down."

The students explain: "We used three tactics to get our message across. By using point of view, we put the viewer in the wavering eyes of a driver being tested for driving under the influence. By using a shifting, shallow focus, we illustrated the brink of intoxication. And by using a slightly lowered angle, we added authority to the officer administering the test. All combined, these techniques intimidate the viewer, and hopefully will inspire enough fear that drivers will consider the consequences of their actions."

Easy to grade? You bet. Their creativity does all the work. ■**CMR**

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# The Stories Project

## Connecting high school students to the community through TV production

■ BY MARY ANN JANOSKO

**V**ideo projects for high school TV production classes need to engage the students, have subject matter appropriate for a school setting, and also meet the goals of the state curriculum frameworks. (See the Massachusetts frameworks at [www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current/](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current/).) The Stories Project, based at Sharon High School in Sharon, Massachusetts, does all this and more ([www.sharon.k12.ma.us/school/shs/shsmain.html](http://www.sharon.k12.ma.us/school/shs/shsmain.html)). Using educational terminology, it is an intergenerational, oral history project, which demonstrates the integration of video technology into the curriculum using the documentary format. The project also forges positive interactions between the students and the community.

This idea, inspired by a feature on National Public Radio called StoryCorps ([www.storycorps.net](http://www.storycorps.net)), was modified for high school television production class. The project is organized into three components: the interview, the editing, and the celebration. While together they comprise a whole, each part plays a unique role.

In the first part, the high school students interview community members who have a story that they are willing to share. The stories can be random or planned around a specific theme. An open invitation to the town can gather citizens willing to come to the high school and have their story videotaped. And local resources, such as the Council on Aging or the town's

veterans' agent, can also help students find individuals willing to participate in the project.

In the original plan, the individuals being interviewed were always elderly. This was to satisfy the goal of increasing the interaction between teenagers and senior citizens. In Sharon, in addition to the open calls for stories, theme-based projects have included: The 1960s, war, and the memories of ladies in a town social organization. On the designated taping day, a student crew has a half-hour of studio time to organize their set, welcome and mic the guest, and conduct the interview. In addition to the five W's (who, what, when,

where, and why), the students also ask follow-up questions to insure that all components of the guest's story are completely clear and fully explained for the viewer.

In the next part of the project, the students give the interviews a polished and professional look using video editing software (Final Cut Express). They eliminate all extraneous elements, use transitions to cover cuts, and add titles, music, and images that may enhance the project. For example, the guests sometimes bring items with them, such as telegrams, letters, military discharge certificates, or photos. These are videotaped and included as video inserts in the



## The Stories Project (*continued*)

Mary Ann Janosko established the TV/Media program at Sharon High School when the school opened a TV studio as part of an expansion of its technology offerings. Her previous experience includes various roles at cable television stations.

As a high school social studies teacher, Janosko taught a wide range of courses at both inner-city and suburban schools.



finished project. Sometimes photos of World War II fighter planes, the Vietnam War Memorial, or other images from popular culture are also added to enhance the interview.

When the student teams have completed the editing process, the segments are gathered onto a portable hard drive, and combined into one DVD. Students create a menu for the DVD, design an appropriate label, and help in the duplication process. Enough DVDs are made so that each one of the participants can receive a professional-looking DVD as a gift.

The final component of the project is Premiere Night, an evening celebration. The participants, the students, their parents, and administrators are invited to see the videos on a big screen in the school library. Refreshments are served, and everyone socializes and discusses the final result of the project. The videos are also later aired on local cable television (Sharon TV, [www.sharontv.com](http://www.sharontv.com)) for the whole town to view.

These activities expand the students' experience beyond a classroom assignment to the wider community. In addition, this opening night adds a different dimension to student feedback, extending it beyond simply earning a grade. When the students hear the applause, receive face-to-face thanks, and feel the appreciation and recognition of their technical skills and abilities, it reverberates and becomes positive motivation for future class work.

Both students and participants react to the process of recording a

story on a personal level. The adults feel valued and appreciate that a teenager wanted to listen to, and record, what they had to say. On the other side, the students are surprised, as well as impressed, by the diversity and the drama of the adults' stories. Often, since the events described by the adults took place at a time when they were teenagers or young adults, they establish a connection between the participants that the teenagers did not expect. Some of the dramatic stories that have been recorded—which also created empathy among the students—are fleeing from Germany during the Nazi era, surviving a plane crash, living without electricity and indoor plumbing, swimming in water made radioactive by atomic bomb blasts, and leaving high school or college to fight in wars.

Some of the stories have a twofold impact on the students, creating both empathy and a heightened awareness of world events that previously may have been just distant ideas described in a social studies textbook. For example, one student observed that her interview subject was almost her age when he directed airplanes flying over the Himalaya mountains during World War II. Another student said of an interviewee, "Her boyfriend was killed in the Vietnam War when she was just two years older than I am now."

Feedback from the adult participants has been both positive and varied. The adults almost always mention the high quality and professional look of the finished video. They also make comments regarding the unique

nature of each story, even when the stories are about the same topic.

Future plans for the project include using a survey as a more formalized way to obtain and evaluate feedback from the participants. Questions will solicit information about the quality of student behavior during the interview process, as well as input about interviewees' reactions to the final video product.

In a small way, this activity provides an opportunity for the students to "give back" to the community. And, at the same time, it allows the community to see a positive outcome from the resources that go into the community's schools. This endeavor is a small step toward reinforcing or establishing a pattern of individual contribution to the community, which is a worthy and valuable goal for all in our society.

The Stories Project concept is flexible and can be adapted for use by cable access stations as well as high school classes. Each individual has a story to tell, so in this way, each story becomes a unique and interesting segment. If an overall topic or theme is selected for the project, it can be varied for each version of the video, so as not to become stale, routine, or predictable. Community resources, the experience of the town's residents, and the talents and interests of the students can be tapped to facilitate the best outcome of the project. Building connections among community members is valuable, and it's really not that difficult using the Stories Project model. ■CMR



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# Fairmont High Schools Interactive Media Program: Making An Impact Through Access

■ BY KARL BREMER AND ANDY VALERI

*Cynthia Bremer provided assistance with this article.*

**Partnerships between school media programs and local governments offer benefits for all involved.**

The benefits of and the necessity for the kinds of learning experiences offered through the availability of educational access are certainly well-represented in the ongoing story of Kettering Media Productions and WKET radio. Both are operated by Fairmont High School, a 2,500-student public school serving the city of Kettering, a southern suburb of Dayton, Ohio. Kettering Media & WKET are a formal technical and career training curriculum and a student-led, 10-watt FM radio station licensed by the FCC.

Broadcast media started at Fairmont High School in 1975 with the launch of WKET, a 10-watt non-commercial radio station. Conceived by a group of junior high school students prior to their arrival at high school, the radio broadcasting program developed and operated as an extracurricular radio club from 1975 until 1978.

In 1979, a young Fairmont English teacher, Karl Bremer, became the station manager and began offering one class period per day for students to work in the WKET radio station. With no structured curriculum, the program began to organically develop into working with the students in an ever-widening range of media formats, including broadcast journalism, radio production, and basic electronics. This originally one-hour class grew into an ongoing regular career tech program featuring six class periods each day.

Over the course of the next decade, the radio program inspired students to add remote sports broadcasting. They also began soliciting disc jockey work at dances and parties to earn money to acquire music and supplies for the growing program.

In 1987, school administrators inquired about adding a video production component

to the media program. With the aid of federal funding, the district purchased professional video cameras and editing equipment. The school's first video production site was located in the same building as the Miami Valley Communications Council (MVCC), the area's multi-jurisdictional public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access provider, of which the city of Kettering was a participating member. Fairmont's media students created hundreds of hours of programming on topics of interest to the school, the local community, and the students themselves, including programs on such themes as skateboarding and electronic games. Co-location with MVCC created an effective synergy and served as a catalyst in expanding the school's ability to provide valuable learning opportunities about the complexities of video production.

During the early years, funding for the student radio and television program came from the school district, grants from MVCC, and student fundraisers. In 1995, the program received a \$100,000 state grant that was used to upgrade the three cameras used in the school TV studio, which was now located at the high school and designed to do live TV production work around campus. The program was emerging as a full, multi-faceted, tech prep career program that also provided nearly a hundred hours of original programming for MVCC's educational access channel every year. After MVCC's facility relocation from Kettering to Centerville, the Fairmont video studio was connected to MVCC (first via coax and now through video IP technology) and their playback facilities to do live programming for educational access TV.

In 1999, the growing success and ever-increasing quality of the Kettering Media





Laura Hutchens and Karl Bremer of Kettering Fairmont Media Productions.

program and the positive impact it was having on both the schools and the students led to the receipt of another grant. The Ohio Board of Education disbursed \$50,000 to the program to equip a remote production truck donated by WHIO-TV, a local commercial broadcast station ([www.whiotv.com](http://www.whiotv.com)).

In 2000, the school district committed to expansion of the media communications and tech prep program through the addition of a second teacher to help provide for the growing quality and capabilities of the program. Laura Hutchens, a professional with extensive experience at MVCC, CNN, and the Cartoon Network, added a new dimension of quality and quantity to student training and media production work ([laura.hutchens@ketteringschools.org](mailto:laura.hutchens@ketteringschools.org)). Other teachers within Kettering schools also became major contributors to the ongoing success of Fairmont Media Productions. English teacher Sharon Rab (now retired), has been producing and hosting

her show *Writer to Writer*, featuring presentations by and discussions with nationally known authors for more than a decade. Janet Nixon, another English teacher, produces *Icons of Kettering Education*, featuring the inspiring stories and experiences of retired educators. Nixon and students also produce the popular show *Paws Club*, which features personal stories about a wide range of animals highlighting responsible pet ownership, in conjunction with SISCA, a local animal rescue and adoption agency.

Some of the other programs include a weekly live student-produced show, *Good Morning Fairmont*, which uses a news style format blending humor and public and school announcements and showcasing student groups and achievements. Expanded use of the remote production truck, often in cooperation with MVCC, has resulted in more than 22 sporting events being covered so far this year. Student-run radio broadcasting from the

In 2000, the school district committed to expansion of the media communications and tech prep program through the addition of a second teacher to help provide for the growing quality and capabilities of the program.

## Fairmont High Schools Interactive Media Program *(continued)*

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**Karl Bremer is a certified teacher of English, Reading and Social Studies. He has supervised Fairmont High School's WKET radio since 1978 and has taught video production since 1987. Bremer (karl.bremer@ketteringschools.org) is in his 36th year in the Kettering City Schools.**

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**Andy Valeri (andy@ustvmedia.org) is programming supervisor at the Miami Valley Communications Council and a long-time veteran of community access media. He is currently involved in a graduate program defining communication as a fundamental human right at the University of Dayton, and serves on CMR's editorial board.**

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studios of WKET FM also continues daily under FCC license.

Fairmont's media production has continued to evolve with the advent of new technologies in the digital age. Advanced digital editing is taught regularly by Hutchens, and with the increasing integration with computer technology, the limits to what students can hope to accomplish within this program continue to disappear. Fairmont media students also participate in expanded educational training opportunities through attending Sinclair Community College two days per week. This cooperative educational venture developed in partnership between Kettering schools and this local community college in Dayton, Ohio, lets them learn digital design software like Photoshop, Dreamweaver, and Flash. Students can even earn dual high school and college credit within the program.

As a result of collaboration with both the City of Kettering and MVCC, Fairmont High School's WKET and media production studio will be connected to the world through fiber-optic video IP technology. This collaboration is making it possible for the student operation to use "dark" fibers to get both the radio signal and live TV to the cable hub and the radio transmitter, located over a half mile away from the school. The benefits are the superior signal quality that fiber provides and an estimated cost savings of more than \$20,000 for the school district. With technical support provided by the city, MVCC, and school district staff, the actual cost for equipment is only around \$2,500 for the kind of capability that the Kettering school system could never have accomplished on its own without these cooperative relationships.

Despite the broad success and impact of this program, it is not immune from the kinds of demands we see placed upon public education nationwide. Keeping pace with the equipment costs alone is nearly impossible as heavy student usage, technological advances, and digital conversion quickly outstrip resources.

In these tough economic times, lack of funding and competing demands within public education may threaten the viability of the program itself. Karl Bremer, now a 30-year veteran of the program, is exploring funding options for converting the TV studio to digital cameras and digital media storage. The future viability of the program demands continued investment in technology and balance with the broader educational goals and outcomes required of public education.

Regarding this future viability, some things are already clearly known and proven. Programs such as the Fairmont High School Interactive Media program succeed because of the dedication of visionary educators who continue to create nontraditional learning environments for students. The work hours of these teachers match the varied production schedules of their many projects and students, as well as accommodating weekend repair sessions with the station engineer. Their efforts are often coordinated in support of many of the other departments in the school district, including middle school literacy awareness programs, numerous athletic events, coverage of board of education meetings, award ceremonies, and more.

The value and relevance of the work created through Kettering Media Productions extends beyond the school walls, providing avenues for extensive community service opportunities, expanded public awareness on issues of community interest and concern, collaboration with local government, and partnership with the educational access television services as provided through MVCC. Ultimately, however, the real accomplishments of such programs are measured through the life-changing experiences of the countless students who have benefited from the unique opportunities provided through putting a camera on their shoulder or a microphone in their hand. These programs provide for the discovery of their creative potential, their hidden talents, and even their lifelong career paths. ■CMR

# We've Got the BEAT

■ BY SAM BOYER

For more than a decade, viewers in Brunswick, Ohio, rarely skip a beat when it comes to their school programming. Brunswick is a community of 40,000 located between Cleveland and Akron.

In fact, BEAT, Brunswick City Schools' Educational Access Channel 22, is a nationally recognized channel featuring shows produced primarily by 6th- through 12th-grade students in the district's Video Club.

In 2006, BEAT was selected as the top Educational Access Channel (budget under \$200,000) by the Alliance for Community Media at its annual Hometown Video Awards.

"Actually, I smiled when I saw the budget requirements," says John Wasytko, BEAT's director of community relations, who oversees the channel. "Our annual budget is well under a tenth of \$200,000."

BEAT produces between 125 and 150 shows annually. "Our programming is very eclectic," explains Wasytko, a 30-year video veteran who has worked at Brunswick since 1999.

"Each night, you'll see a newscast anchored by one of our 20 students, as well as view board of education meetings, local sports and concerts, and special school events. But, we also produce shows for special audiences, like *Brunswick Memories*, which features the memories, photos, and archives of lifelong Brunswick residents; *SportsBeat*, which highlights local and national sports figures; cooking shows and movie review shows; and a blend of nationally syndicated shows, which adds to the diversity of our channel."

"But the heart of the channel is our students," explains Wasytko. Recently, 7th-grade BEAT reporter Rachel Williams conducted an interview with Ohio Governor Ted Strickland. Strickland was so impressed, he later nicknamed her "Katie Couric."

Meanwhile, in another part of town, 7th-grader Nicole Rhoades and 11th-grader Brittany Lemmerman were on location, interviewing two members of the Cleveland Cavaliers NBA basketball team.

"The community enjoys watching these up-and-coming talents," says Wasytko. "They have quite a local following." They also are respected throughout the area, as the club recently placed first in SportsTime

Ohio's prestigious Broadcast/Media Production Awards, which highlight the best in school programming throughout Northeast Ohio.

Each year, 20 to 25 students are selected to participate in a unique three-year journalism and media production program that supports the BEAT channel.

"Last year, more than 750 students requested our application packet," Wasytko notes. The extensive application requires three letters of recommendation from teachers and a face-to-face interview with video club co-advisor Sam Boyer and two senior-level video club students.

"A key component in becoming a member," Wasytko emphasizes, "is



BEAT second-year students with John Wasytko giving the "fist bump" in honor of their SportsTime Ohio award.



## We've Got the BEAT *(continued)*



**Above:** Seventh-grader Nicole Rhoades operates the camera during a Brunswick School News taping. **At right:** Students like eleventh-grader Brittany Lemmerman use HD equipment, like the Grass Valley Indigo switcher, to produce their segments.



the willingness to write and bring fresh ideas to the channel. Language Arts is the core of our program.”

In their first year, club members focus primarily on developing their journalism skills as they each create one new story each month to support the district’s print and online publications. In mid-year, students develop video stories and work on their on-camera interviewing skills.

In their second year, students continue to write monthly stories, but also develop their technical skills. “We reward our journalists who commit to our program with the privilege to work with the latest technology,” Wasylo says. “Our students work on the latest HD equipment, purchased with funds donated by the community.” Over the past five years, more than 70 video club sponsors have donated nearly \$100,000 in support of the channel and club.

Students learn basic videography, audio, lighting, and editing skills, as well as how to be a part of a multi-camera, live-to-tape production team. “Our goal is to give them as much of a taste of what is expected in today’s media industry—warts and all,” said Wasylo. “Today’s world is requiring media journalists to be both in front of and behind the camera. We want our students’ portfolios to reflect these requirements, giving them a better chance to succeed.”

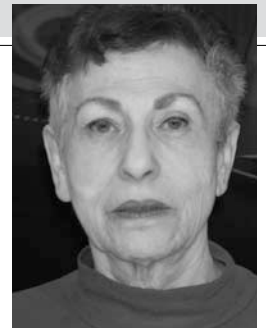
Most recently, several of the students’ segments have aired on nationally syndicated shows, like the Discovery Channel’s *Education News Parents Can Use*, and SAMHSA’s *Road to Recovery* shows. “Now that our shows are also on the Web, national producers can see our work, which opens us up to a whole new audience,” Wasylo explains.

In 2008, the district purchased a new LEIGHTRONIX UltraNEXUS video server and a PEG Central Web hosting and streaming video on demand account. This combination addressed two needs: the channel’s ever-expanding cable programming, and the desire to make these shows available to a web audience. “It has surpassed our expectations,” Wasylo says with pride. “The server allows us to air a different show on cable every hour. Plus, it allows us to re-package older shows on the Web, thus attracting a new audience.”

Wasylo sees the potential in cable access and the Internet supporting each other. “A great example is our holiday concert series,” he explains. “In December, traditionally we tape between 15 and 20 concerts annually in a two-week period. Because of scheduling conflicts, we can’t air all of



Sam Boyer is a 50-year veteran of the newspaper business who continues to do a weekly column following retirement. She has been the journalistic advisor to the Brunswick Video Club since the 2007–2008 school year, working with sixth- through twelfth-graders.



*Eleventh-grader Sean O'Connor proudly displays SportsTime Ohio's "Bump" award.*

the concerts in their entirety on cable. But this year, we did something different—we created a five-hour block of concert excerpts for cable, with a graphic informing viewers that they can watch each concert in its entirety on our website. We had more than 1,800 hits over a two-week period, which showed me that cable and the Web can support each other.” ■**CMR**

*For more information on Channel 22/ The BEAT, contact John Wasylko, director of community relations, at 330/441-2259, or [jwasylko@bcsoh.org](mailto:jwasylko@bcsoh.org). Visit the Brunswick Schools Video Club at [www.brunswickschoolsvideoclub.org](http://www.brunswickschoolsvideoclub.org), or BEAT at [www.bcsoh.org](http://www.bcsoh.org).*



*Seventh-grader Hailey Clouse adjusts some new ARRI fluorescent lights for an upcoming shoot.*

# Solid-State Workflow Considerations

■ BY KEN FREED

**T**he video industry has moved completely to the use of solid-state media for video acquisition. There are several types of computer cards and video formats, so how do you choose the right solid-state form for your school or access station?

You should consider the following factors:

- Media cost and availability
- Media data with good image quality
- Speed of workflow, and
- Archiving of final edited data.

Imagine you are an educator with a number of students who love every minute of the hours of content they've created. They expect all of their footage to be available on your servers. But providing this level of access for them will tie up your servers and your non-linear editing systems if the solid-state form you select isn't the right one for you.

Your students will be more productive if they can edit right from their computer cards and if they each have their own cards. But you can't expect the student to be able to afford a couple of computer cards, which can range from \$200 to \$1,500 per card. So you need media that uses commonly available cards that cost less than \$25, and preferably less than \$15 each.

Of course, there are some less expensive cards that involve lengthy transfer times for your editing systems to convert the data. In this case, your editing systems are then tied up doing data transfers, rather than editing. You want to look for a solid-state form that provides immediate editing with no transfer time at all.

Different media forms use different methods of encoding the video data and therefore they give different levels of video quality. You want to look for a media form that gives a moderate data rate so you have good image quality without the very high costs of having media that can do very high data rates.

You also want to be able to plug the media card into your editor and have the clips play on the timeline from the card. There should be no need to do a lengthy "log and capture" or "log and transfer" operation in order to get the data to your hard drives. This method offers the fastest workflow and the content stays on the student's cards, not on your servers.

Archiving is one more consideration for you to investigate. Archiving to hard drives is very expensive and so is archiving to computer cards. You need to be able to store your video quickly and to inexpensive cards that are available everywhere.

So you should be looking for a solid-state media form that gives you:

- Media cards that are commonly available and low-cost
- Moderate data rate with high image quality
- Workflow without any transfer time, and
- Media cards cheap enough to archive on.

It's not a matter of choosing good, fast, or cheap: You want all three. ■**CMR**



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**Ken Freed, district manager for JVC Professional Company, has taught at corporations and colleges. He brings a broad knowledge of video products and their operation to help people choose the right products to accomplish their goals. Freed's 20-year background in customer support and 15-year experience in video sales and production allow him to provide informed answers to a range of audiences.**

# Educational Access—Give us a Button on the Home Page

■ BY JEFF POSSANZA

**T**he first three years that my son was in elementary school, I brought my video camera to document his annual holiday program. This year I left the HI-8 camcorder at home, though. I knew the program would be captured by professional videographers, with better equipment and better technique.

Within days of the event, the elementary school holiday programs began to appear on the local school channel. My fourth-grader and I went right to the school website to find out the next time the program would be rebroadcast.

On the school's home page, in the main menu, was a link to the district cable channel. Right up there with other items such as "Bond Updates," "Bus Schedules," and "Curriculum," was a direct link to the district educational access cable channel website. I was thrilled to see that the local cable channel ranked high on the district's list of priorities. Clearly they have learned the power of video and cable television.

We quickly found what we were looking for using the online program guide. Next we looked for a streaming video button. No such luck. Though the district has an amazing video program, it currently has no capabilities for streaming video-on-demand. So what will it take to get them streaming?

Many television operations have hosted their own on-demand service, building a server from the ground up and offering streaming originating from their own facility. With the right combination of hardware, software, and know-how, it can be done.

Now streaming video-on-demand services designed for the needs of PEG access are making things even easier for local cable operations. These end-to-end services handle it all, including channel automation, Internet media hosting, and streaming video-on-demand.

Local cable operations can seamlessly integrate streaming into their existing workflows

by coupling a PEG streaming service with an affordable video server that offers dual, simultaneous video encoding for broadcast and the Internet. Just as you would normally record any program to your video server for broadcast, a secondary file identical in content, yet optimized for the Internet, would be created in the background. The server then automatically transfers the optimized media file to your custom branded online streaming portal.

It really has become that easy to stream video online and these new systems can get you started almost immediately, with very little change to your current digital workflow. No additional expensive encoding hardware is required. No worries arise about transcoding, licensing of digital media, bandwidth, or the added strain on your local network while potentially hundreds of online viewers log on at peak times. The right streaming solution will complement your local channel operations, not complicate them.

Streaming is one of the best things to ever happen to educational access, reaching beyond the cable system to a worldwide audience. Streaming supplements the cable channel, doing things that cable cannot do. A streaming website provides high-quality video via the convenience of the Internet and 24/7 availability. Overflow programming from the holiday season can appear in its entirety online along with hundreds of hours of current and archived programming, board of education meetings, fine arts performances, and sporting events.

The quality of streaming video is rapidly improving with a faster Internet and better compression technology, allowing onscreen resolution approaching that of broadcast television. Specialty equipment and online services have brought broadcasting and streaming closer than ever, providing system solutions that simplify workflows. ■CMR



**Jeff Possanza is the director of marketing for LEIGHTRONIX, INC. During his 18-year career at LEIGHTRONIX, he has spent most of his time providing and supporting specialty television automation and video server systems for PEG access and other local cable operations. Possanza got his start in PEG access in the early 1980s as a volunteer camera operator at the Public Access Center in East Lansing, Michigan. At the same time, Jeff worked for a professional video dealer as a part-time video technician servicing and installing a wide range of video/audio equipment.**

# Nonlinear Workflow in Community Media Production

■ BY JASON DANIELS

**Editing video on the computer provides the same sense of mastery over the moving image that using word processing software on a computer does for the written word versus using a typewriter.**

**N**onlinear editing is an inescapable reality of digital video production. Over the past fifteen years, these tools have dropped in price and increased in sophistication—a technology that once cost as much as a new car can now be operated by a middle-school student with virtually no training. Timelines, clip windows, and transitions are native to our younger constituents, while some older members of our community struggle with these concepts. Editing video on the computer provides the same sense of mastery over the moving image that using word processing software on a computer does for the written word versus using a typewriter. My ambivalence about nonlinear editing stems not from the quality of the final product, but the time it takes to create it—time that is taken away from other activities in my small community media center.

Software-based editing offers almost limitless control over a digital media creation. In my experience, around 2005 we passed a point at which computer processing was powerful enough and hard drive storage so abundant and affordable that any project conceived at a community media center could be a reality. While the media of digital tapes, firewire, and hard drives themselves are very fragile and delicate compared with their analog predecessors, as a producer and consumer I am at the mercy of the market. The market is migrating toward hard disks and solid state recordings, so nonlinear editing is definitely here to stay.

The crucial challenge with nonlinear editing rests in how and when people use these tools. What is their net effect upon the mission of the organization? I would argue that the results are more mixed the closer one looks, but let's start with the positive aspects of the process.

The glory of nonlinear editing comes from a well managed project. Clips are properly named and stored in folders. A wide range of effects, titles, and audio tweaking options are all just a click away. Working on a project that is well prepared makes nonlinear editing a true joy, very creative and extremely efficient. And organizing a project like this is a great exercise for a new editor, an intern, or even an older, somewhat computer savvy producer who is not ready to jump into his or her own project.

At my small center, when we have more than three people working on the same computer over an extended period of time, it is essential that we all understand file management. Otherwise, files get lost, mixed up, deleted, or saved in incorrect places. The learning curve for nonlinear editing is built on a foundation of computer literacy and there is no way around that. This excludes producers with more experience who are not computer-literate, however.

The best part about nonlinear editing also opens the door for what I think is the most unsavory aspect of nonlinear editing. Having lots of options and this seemingly incredible amount of power at your fingertips often de-emphasizes the production values of the project being edited. Once my students grasp the power of nonlinear editing, it sometimes becomes a crutch for them. Seduced by the limitless possibilities, nonlinear editing becomes a chore offering too many choices—a mental marathon. Instead of insisting on quality production from the project's outset, they assume that basic production issues like poor lighting and noisy, distorted sounds will somehow get fixed during the editing process.

I also find that projects take longer to finish with nonlinear editing than they do in a tape-to-tape environment. This dampens



Jason Daniels has been working with nonlinear editing for more than 11 years as a producer and educator. He is currently the executive director of Medfield.TV in Medfield, Massachusetts, and serves on the Northeast Regional Board of the Alliance for Community Media. Daniels founded the 100 Second Film Festival.



the immediacy, timeliness, and impact of community media by focusing our work more on postproduction. Although nonlinear editing is now the default option for video postproduction, I urge producers to look toward opportunities to streamline this part of the process and even to identify opportunities to bypass it altogether, especially when timeliness of your material is a factor. Sometimes we use our master control room as a large tape-to-tape editing system if all we need are titles or graphics on a longer production.

We work constantly with junior producers to help us manage files, and create nonlinear projects that are well organized. We subscribe to Lynda.com for terrific tutorials on editing and computer fundamentals. We also do most of our exporting and rendering at night, to avoid tying up the machines during busy hours.

In short, we try to maintain nonlinear editing as the fun and creative opportunity it is designed to be, rather than becoming less careful about our production values. ■CMR

## Alliance for Communications Democracy



*For more than 15 years, the Alliance for Communications Democracy has been fighting to preserve and strengthen access. Though the odds against us have been high, and the mega-media, corporate foes well-heeled and powerful, time and again we've won in the courts. We can't continue this critical work without your support. With the ramifications of the 1996 Telecommunications Act still manifesting themselves, and new legislation on the horizon, we must be vigilant if we are to prevail and preserve democratic communications. If not us, who? If not now, when? Please join the Alliance for Communications Democracy today!*

Become an Alliance Subscriber for \$350/year and receive detailed reports on current court cases threatening access, pertinent historical case citations, and other Alliance for Communications Democracy activities.

- Voting membership open to nonprofit access operations for an annual contribution of \$3,000.
- Associate, Supporter and Subscriber memberships available to organizations and individuals at the following levels:
- Alliance Associate \$2500 – copies of all briefs and reports.
- Alliance Supporter \$500 – copies of all reports and enclosures.
- Alliance Subscriber \$350 – copies of all reports.

Direct membership inquiries to ACD Treasurer Sam Behrend, Access Tucson, 124 E. Broadway Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85701, telephone 520.624.9833[x103], or email at [sam@accesstucson.org](mailto:sam@accesstucson.org)

**[www.theacd.org](http://www.theacd.org)**

# Student-Run TV Conference Creates Opportunities Fostering Real World Connections and Teaching 21st-century Skills

■ BY DANIELLE MANNION

**A conference  
by students for  
students yields  
big results.**

Imagine sitting in an auditorium filled with hundreds of high school students who are passionate about TV production. The lights dim, and the crowd cheers as if they are at a pep rally as their high schools' names appear in graphics on the big screen. "Welcome to Lights! Camera! Action! New England's High School Media Production Conference!" the student at the podium says, "Today you will have the chance to network with professionals in the industry, and students who are just like you. They love to shoot, edit, and broadcast their productions."

Lights! Camera! Action! The New England Media Production Conference is a free conference, run entirely by the student staff at Millis High School ([www.millisps.org](http://www.millisps.org)) in Millis, Massachusetts (population 8,500). It is just like any professional conference we would attend as adults, except that it is run by students for students. Six years ago, my television production class asked what other educational access studios produced for programming. The answer came in the form of a student-run TV production conference, which has influenced more than one thousand students across New England. Although the day itself is exciting, the planning process has changed my curriculum in dramatic ways. In addition, the real-world connections have led to many incredible outside opportunities for my students and me.

Each year's conference has a theme. Past themes have ranged from presidential politics and the media to TV production in the digital world. Students arrive at 8:30 a.m. by bus, car, and even limo, excited to see their film at the short opening film festival. Each school is challenged to produce a two-minute video that must include some props and lines of

dialogue, as well as stay within a genre. This year, the genre is comedy, and the conference will be held on April 9. The schools are given about one month's notice to create their films.

The Millis High School students dictate the conference's agenda and request that the presenters treat the student audience as if they were industry professionals. As they enter the conference, students are invited to sign up for two workshops. Past workshop topics have ranged from journalistic ethics in a reality show society (speakers were contestants on *Survivor* and *Trading Spaces*) to covering the Red Sox during the World Series. Other workshops have focused on set design, editing, flash animation, the life of an independent producer, a career in voice-over, and more. All of the Boston affiliate stations support the event. Apple Computer joins us each year to showcase the latest technology tips on Final Cut Pro, podcasting, and more.

"It is very exciting to meet people who are doing our dream jobs!" Millis student Stacey Kalivas explains.

Each year, we ask one or two high schools to do a presentation about their program. As the conference has grown, we still try to remain true to the original intent of the day, connecting with students who love production and finding out what they do in their schools. "It is wonderful to see the pride the students from the presenting schools feel in the work they do at their schools," says Jon Muldoon, teaching assistant at Millis High School. "These students are doing professional quality work, and it's nice to see them recognized by their peers."

Media literacy topics are always a significant and critical part of the workshops. Today's teenager creates video podcasts, watches

shows on demand, comes to school eager to discuss favorite YouTube videos, and regularly uses digital technologies with more confidence than adults. My students and I knew it would be an opportune time to create an unscripted discussion between students and television and film industry insiders, as these teens consume a steady diet of natural disaster, wartime coverage, and reality shows—all brought into their lives through the media.

Speakers invited to run these groups have come to the conference from Harvard University, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick's office, and the National Academy of TV Arts and Sciences. One recent speaker, David Burt (the station manager for the mayor's office in Boston), remarked, "I was amazed at the insightful comments and questions directed toward the panelists at the Lights! Camera! Action! conference. Educational opportunities provided by conferences such as this can only serve to inspire our next generation of television professionals."

In between the workshops, the students come together for a focused panel discussion on the conference theme. In 2006, this featured a live video chat with Hollywood director Chris Koch, whose credits include the major films *Snow Day* and *A Guy Thing*, as well as many episodes of the popular TV show *Scrubs*. Another year's speakers included producers, editors, and reporters who work in the sports industry.

Student Stacey Kalivas explains what she learns from the day: "We invite people from all parts of the industry, from a local news anchor and the producer of an upcoming feature film to animators and editors. This past year, there was a roundtable discussion involving three people who worked on presidential

## Skills for the 21st Century

As The Partnership for 21st Century Skills states on their website ([www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org)), "Educators today are facing the critical challenge to prepare our students to meet the demands of a global community and tomorrow's workforce."

Hosting and organizing a conference of this magnitude utilizes all of the 21st-century skills necessary for students to be successful in this digital society and allows them to interact and network as peers with industry professionals and other passionate students. According to the partnership, "Every child in America needs 21st-century knowledge and skills to succeed as effective citizens, workers, and leaders in this new and different century." With these skills coupled with experiences in the field, dreams can become reality.

campaigns. We also looked at how the media is affecting the election like none other in history. All participants are able to collaborate and share ideas and methods. It is a great learning experience for students who are interested in studying communications."

Not surprising given the demographics of this group, lunch is always pizza. Students are encouraged to mix it up and sit with peers from other schools. They are provided with a variety of guide questions to help facilitate discussions. We hold the much-anticipated electronics raffle at this time. This year, the president of the New England Chapter of the National Academy of TV Arts and Sciences (NATAS) will announce the winners of the National Student TV Awards. Many of the schools attending the conference have entered this prestigious competition.

Planning for the next conference begins the day after the conference is held. The student staff sits down together and reviews

## Student-Run TV Conference Creates Opportunities *(continued)*



*At registration students receive a swag bag filled with Lights! Camera! Action! pens, T-shirts and information about the day. The conference is free to all who attend.*

the evaluations. They also discuss what went well and what they would like to change for the following year. The feedback is important to them. The student organizers have a deep sense of ownership and pride in this event. Many of the students return to attend the event even after they graduate. One of our graduates has a degree in graphics and works with our students each year to design the logo and T-shirt.

A surprising element that has developed from the conference is the vast array of connections we now have to the New England TV industry. The response from the professionals in the community has been tremendous. Not only are they delighted to speak with students, but also some have hired students from the conference as college interns.

Because of my work with Lights! Camera! Action! I was asked to be part of the Board of Governors for the New England Chapter of the National Academy of TV Arts and Sciences. Now, the chapter is one of the two major sponsors of the conference and academy members play a significant role as presenters in the conference. When NATAS lost their funding for the National Student TV Awards, we were able to continue to hold the competition, largely due to the student staff and our network of teachers in New England.

An additional benefit provided by the conference is the connections that have been

made among the educators. For years, I was the isolated TV teacher in my school, and now I have a network of colleagues who run educational access studios in their schools. We frequently share ideas, commiserate when frustrated, and have a friendly rivalry in competitions. This collegiality is invaluable.

Millis High School TV students and I have been speakers at the Video Educators of New England Conference, Apple Computer seminar, and at the 2008 Building Learning Communities conference. Because of conference connections, we have been hired to produce a variety of professional videos for local organizations and corporations. These outside opportunities have completely increased the rigor in my classroom. When students are working on projects that include real-world relevance, they perform at a higher standard.

Students entering our studios are not traditional learners. Today's digital students need to be engaged using new teaching strategies to excite them and inspire them to be passionate lifelong learners. ■CMR



**Danielle Mannion is a graduate of Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Communications. Currently the television production teacher at Millis Middle/High School, she has twenty years of teaching experience in the Massachusetts public schools. Mannion's students have won many awards, including the National Student Television Award for Excellence. She also serves on the Board of Governors for the New England Chapter of the National Academy of TV Arts and Sciences.**



# You Are Not Alone

■ BY PHILLIP L. HARRIS

**W**hat is the most outrageous request you've had from your colleagues? Do they suggest projects implying that they're helping you find things for your journalism students to do? You are not alone. The comments below came from teachers nationwide, who contributed them to the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation (RTNDF) High School Broadcast Journalism online forums:

- "This could be a great project for your students."
- "Hello, my 9-year old daughter is involved with an outside ballet group and she has a recital coming up. I was thinking this would make for a great project for your kids to film this event! You know, real-world experience?"
- "I know I've never taken one of your classes, but our Spanish teacher said we could do a video to replace an assignment, and she said we should come to you and you could show us how to use a camera and edit. Oh, by the way, we need to use one of your cameras and, also, the project is due tomorrow..."
- "I have a student teacher who needs a video of herself teaching in class for her portfolio. Can you record that on your prep?"
- "Can you make a promo for our upcoming dance to run on the news on Monday? We only need it to be about a minute or so."

- "Could I get this 60-minute-long presentation on tape put on a DVD in 15 minutes?"
- "Or could you make us a football season highlight DVD in two days for the banquet?"
- "Can you have one of your kids video the banquet? Dinner tickets are \$25."
- "I know I'm not in your class anymore, but can I still use your equipment?"

If you teach television production or broadcast journalism, you very likely are the only person in your building teaching this subject. Depending on the size of your school district, there may be no other person in the entire district who understands the things you have to deal with. You only have the Spanish teacher down the hall to talk to about how your kids keep losing the XLR to mini plug adapters. Does he just give you a blank stare when you talk?

You are also probably the only person in the building who has a clue about what it takes to create a television program. Do you feel like screaming because no one in your school understands the issues with your facility, equipment, or classes?

Even though it sometimes seems you're on an island by yourself, remember this: You are not alone. Hundreds of teachers doing what you do are part of a sharing and support network and get together daily using the Internet. There is the solution to your "lost on a desert island" situation. The Internet lets you be in contact with hundreds of teachers who

teach exactly what you teach. These teachers have the same problems you have and many of them have found solutions to those problems and are willing to share those solutions with you. All you have to do is ask.

The list below details the best resources that are at your disposal. You can pose a question and often will have 10 answers within 15 minutes delivered right to your inbox.



## High School Broadcast Journalism Organization [www.hsbj.org](http://www.hsbj.org)

The High School Broadcast Journalism organization (HSBJ) is sponsored by the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation. This website offers free membership in the organization, access to an e-mail list with hundreds of television production and broadcast journalism teachers, online forums, contests, grants, and much more. The forums offer solutions to many problems in a searchable database that is growing every day. HSBJ also has a teacher e-mail list that you can join to communicate immediately with fellow teachers all over the country.



### **Student Television Network [www.studenttelevision.com](http://www.studenttelevision.com)**

The Student Television Network (STN) has an e-mail list with hundreds of television production and broadcast journalism teachers. Put yourself in touch with all of these kindred spirits instantly. They offer help and advice on the gamut of issues with equipment, classes, and many other topics.

STN also sponsors a national convention yearly with workshops for students and teachers in the areas of broadcast journalism and video production as well as many contests. There is a small fee to join the organization, but you'll be added to their e-mail list immediately when you join. Membership also allows your school to attend the STN convention, to participate in contests, and to receive their newsletters.



### **Kent State University [www.kent.edu](http://www.kent.edu)**

Kent State University is offering an online master's degree for journalism educators. My colleague Janet Kerby developed a 3-credit graduate-level course, Teaching Broadcast Journalism, for broadcast journalism teachers and prospective teachers as part of that program. For more information about the degree or Kerby's course, contact Candace Perkins Bowen at [cbowen@kent.edu](mailto:cbowen@kent.edu).



### **School Video News [www.school-video-news.com](http://www.school-video-news.com)**

School Video News is a free monthly e-magazine with lots of articles of interest to students and to teachers who operate a K-12 school news operation. It also offers many useful links to related sites.



### **SchoolTube [www.SchoolTube.com](http://www.SchoolTube.com)**

SchoolTube is an outlet for showing student work on the Internet. The site is somewhat similar to YouTube. However, material can be uploaded only after being approved by a teacher. Teachers who want their students' work to be available for viewing by anyone on the Internet receive a password from SchoolTube, which is used to filter material and keep inappropriate from being posted. Therefore, SchoolTube is a much safer place than YouTube for students to view the work of other students from all over the world.



### **Student Press Law Center [www.splc.org](http://www.splc.org)**

If you ever have a legal question or a "sticky situation" and you need some legal advice on broadcast journalism issues or other issues related to television, the Student Press Law Center is a great place to find answers quickly and for no cost. They field questions via e-mail and telephone. An attorney is available to give advice to teachers and students.



### Journalism Education Association [www.JEA.org](http://www.JEA.org)

The Journalism Education Association (JEA) is an organization for print and electronic media. They sponsor a national convention twice a year with workshops and competitions for all student media.



### Video Educator Training [www.video-educator-training.com](http://www.video-educator-training.com)

Offers content descriptions and clips of presentations offered by Janet Kerby and me to video production and broadcast journalism teachers nationwide. We can provide individualized training for the teachers in your school, district, system, or state, or help you design curricula or build production facilities. ■CMR



Phillip L. Harris taught television production for 34 years. As a consultant, he helps to design curricula and build production facilities throughout the country. He also authored a high school textbook, *Television Production* (<http://g-w.com/products/detail.asp?id=253>), in 2006. Phil is passionate about sharing his knowledge with fellow TV broadcasting instructors and refers people to his website, [www.video-educator-training.com](http://www.video-educator-training.com). He can be reached at 703-975-7038.

## Alliance for Community Media Spring 2009 Regional Conferences

### Mid-Atlantic Region/ Jersey Access Group

#### Strength Through Sharing

*Friday Luncheon Speaker:*

Gloria Tristani

*Saturday Keynote:*

Scott Weber, former Senior Counsel to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security

**Trade Show May 14 only,  
9 a.m.–4 p.m.**

**May 14-15  
Crown Plaza Hotel  
Edison, NJ**

More info @ [www.acmmar.org](http://www.acmmar.org)

## Alliance for Community Media Spring 2009 Regional Conferences

### Northeast Region

#### Community Media in a Broadband World

#### Two-day trade show

*Keynote Speaker:* Helen Soulé,  
ACM Executive Director

**May 21–22  
Champlain College  
Burlington, VT**

More info @  
[www.acm-ne.org](http://www.acm-ne.org)

# Video Distribution 101

■ BY JENNIFER WAGER

**Clarify who your audience is and find a way to reach them.**

In today's multiplatform media landscape, the old strategy of "film it and they will watch it" doesn't exactly cut it. Moving from a broadcast model to a network model in media has put more power and potential in the hands of the masses, but it also means that we, the people, have to work a little harder to ensure that the media we make is actually seen and, more importantly, makes an impact.

This article will discuss various means of media distribution. Whether you're a student cutting your first video, a veteran filmmaker, or a community group releasing a campaign PSA, the following are symbiotic spheres of distribution that you should consider to guarantee the widest and most meaningful audience possible for your piece. All of these areas relate to and feed into each other, but depending on your content, you may want to emphasize one area over another.

It's important to keep a few objectives in mind, from the very beginning stages of your project:

- What audiences do you want to reach? What venues/media are best to reach them? What impact do I hope to have with these audiences?
- How can you bring your content to new different audiences via a variety of media?
- How can you utilize both low-tech and high-tech solutions to deliver your content to these audiences?

## **Community Access Television**

Maybe because I cut my teeth in video at a community access television station, I always begin with this important but underutilized outlet for grassroots distribution. There are literally thousands of public access, educa-

tional, and governmental (PEG) TV stations across the country and people watch them—a lot. There's no better way to reach deep into a community than sharing your content with PEG TV. It's also a great way to get feedback on your program. And best of all, most PEG TV stations don't have exclusivity contracts, meaning you can air your work on their stations, while retaining control over the rights of your piece. Particularly if your content concerns a social issue that you want to galvanize people around, community access television is a wonderful outlet, because it's one of the most engaging media within the entire broadcast industry.

## **Online**

Distributing your content online means more than just slapping it up on YouTube and hoping for the best. Nowadays it's important to post your content on several different sites to achieve different goals and viral audience building. So, go ahead and put your content on YouTube, but don't stop there. Check out Blip.tv if you want to ensure quality encoding of your content.

Likewise, think of your audience online... and find where they go online, then post your video there. Most video hosting services like Blip.tv and Vimeo.com will allow you to embed your video in Facebook, Myspace, blogs, and so forth so you can find your audience and put your content in front of them. If your content is human rights related, check out The Hub, sponsored by Witness, which features human rights videos from around the world (<http://hub.witness.org>).

Again, generating a meaningful audience online isn't so much about how many eyeballs you can capture, but which ones. You don't



Jennifer Wager currently teaches communications at Essex County College in Newark, New Jersey. She also serves on the board of the National Mobilization Against Sweatshops, with whom she has facilitated a community video oral history project. Since 1995, Wager has created several online experimental education projects, including the Smithsonian-award winning W.E.B. Du Bois Virtual University. Wager holds a M.A. in African Studies from Ohio State University and a M.A. in Communication and Technology from Georgetown University.



necessarily care about the eyeballs that are dredging YouTube for hot girls, cute puppies, or kids falling off skateboards. You want your content to reach people who will be affected by it and then do something—call their congressperson, write an e-mail to an organization, educate themselves about your topic, or just buy your film.

### Film Festivals

For every kind of film, there's a festival for it—you just have to find the festivals that are perfect for your film. This can be an expensive process, so to keep costs down, be realistic about what festivals your film will attract and what you hope to get out of the festival circuit. Festivals are great for networking and generating buzz about your film, but don't get too hung up on them. Look for free and low-cost festivals first at a service like Withoutabox.com, where you can fill out one application and simultaneously apply to many festivals so it's not an overwhelming process.

### International

All of these areas often open up possibilities for international distribution as well, so keep that in mind. Many social issues transcend national borders, and you may find that your piece resonates around the globe as well as at home. Actively look for international outlets at film festivals, online hosting providers, and community access TV gatherings (don't forget that South Africa, South Korea, Ghana, and many Latin American countries all have thriving community TV movements). To send your piece for showing, you can facilitate full quality video file sharing through pando.com and other large file-sharing providers.

## Resources You Can Use

### Community Access Television

ACM—[www.ourchannels.org](http://www.ourchannels.org)

Includes a listing of PEG stations nationwide:

[www.ourchannels.org/alpha.htm](http://www.ourchannels.org/alpha.htm)

### Film Festivals

One-stop applications to thousands of film festivals worldwide at [www.withoutabox.com](http://www.withoutabox.com)

### Online

You know YouTube, but check out these other online sources:

**www.Vimeo.com**—The best source for HD encoded content online.

**www.Blip.tv**—Much better quality encoding than Youtube and really nice interface.

**http://hub.witness.org**—Great source for human rights and social justice related content.

**www.utterli.com**—Distribution of audio, video and text, (think multimedia Twitter).

### DVD Sales

**www.Discmakers.com**

**www.Filmbaby.com**

**www.createpace.com**

## The Best for the Least: Transcoding Your Videos for Optimized Online Viewing

**Export:** Quicktime Movie

**PC:** Export as DV/AVI

**Compression**—H.264

**Frame Rate**—15 (smaller size) or 30 (on some computers 30 doesn't look that good)

**Key Frame**—every 24 frames

**Bit Rate**—the higher the data rate the better the quality, but bigger the file size. For streaming to

384K broadband connections, you need to limit the data rate to around 350–360 kilobits per second to leave room for network traffic

**Size**—640 x 480 or SD

**Sound**—AAC | mono

**Target rate and bit rate**—32–68khz

**Music oriented**—96/112/128

*Thanks to Ivetza Sanchez of Manhattan Neighborhood Network for these suggested settings.*

### DVDs Made EZ

While many of us are focused on online distribution, don't forget that DVDs and VCDs (video compact discs) are how most folks watch independent film. DVDs are great for distributing your film to policymakers, funders, and other people you want to reach with your message. DVDs can also be a great fundraising tool—as long as you're smart about duplication and marketing. Check out the sidebar (see p. 31) for some good sources for that.

And don't worry, you don't have to be a technological genius to make a DVD. Simple software programs, like iDVD, can give you amazing results.

### Reaching "The Community"

DVDs are great for organizing mass community and house screenings of your film too. If you empower people across the country (and the world) to get a copy of your film

and organize a screening, you've made great strides toward reaching new audiences that you could never have envisioned at the beginning of your project.

Community screenings allow you to build relationships with organizations (often through co-sponsorship) which can keep your film alive for years to come. They also can provide more visibility and press coverage for your project.

Finally, don't forget that distribution is all about community—that is, reaching those communities that are your likely audience and hopefully, through your film, your little grain of sand, making your community that much better. ■**CMR**

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Check out Wager's first feature documentary, *Venezuela Rising*, which was broadcast on Venezuelan television and has been screened at film festivals around the world, at [www.nuamerica.org/thefilm.htm](http://www.nuamerica.org/thefilm.htm).



**Alliance for Community Media**

Building Community through Media



# Keep Us Connected

## Stand Up and Be Counted!



## At the Federal, State and Local Levels Community Voices Are Being Silenced

The ACM has been working to protect your voice and the future of community media!

- Testified at January 2008 Hearing House Telecommunication Subcommittee on video providers' discriminatory treatment of PEG channels.
- Initiated and testified at September 2008 House Appropriations Committee on Financial Services and General Government Hearing on damages to PEG channels caused by the current regulatory and business environment.
- Filed a Petition for Declaratory Ruling with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) charging that telecom giant AT&T discriminates against local public channels with its U-verse cable TV system.
- Filed an Appeal to the Supreme Court of 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit Decision on Video Franchising.
- Working with federal and state legislators to introduce changes in federal state laws that will protect PEG channels and funding.
- Collaborating with other organizations such as Media and Democracy Coalition to protect Community Media Centers and PEG access.

**Visit our website [www.alliancecm.org](http://www.alliancecm.org) to :**

**Join the ACM  
and  
Make a Donation to the Keep Us Connected Campaign !**

**ACT TODAY!**

Community Media at the  
**Crossroads**  
July 15 - 18, 2009  
Doubletree Hotel Portland - Lloyd Center  
Portland, Oregon



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09

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